

## **Finance Committee Meeting Minutes**

### **January 23, 2007**

Those Present: Al DeVito - chair, Sharon Estrella, Skip Manter, Richard Knabel and Brian Athearn.

Guests: Bruce Stone, Town Accountant Glenn Hearn and John Early, Selectmen; Jennifer Rand, Executive Secretary; Jeremiah Brown, Tree Warden; Richard Olsen, Superintendent of Streets.

This meeting was taped for airing on MVTV.

The meeting was called to order at 4:30 p.m.

#### **Minutes:**

The minutes of the January 16 meeting will be reviewed at the next meeting.

During tonight's meeting the proposed FY08 budgets of the Executive Secretary, the Cemeteries Department, the Tree Warden and the Superintendent of Streets will be reviewed with the FinCom.

#### **Executive Secretary Budget:**

Jennifer's first line item for review was #123, Executive Secretary salary. The increase in this line item includes COLA and a step progression. There was a motion and a second to approve the preliminary salary budget. In the discussion that followed, Richard expressed his desire to wait until after a discussion with the Personnel Department re the 4% COLA increase. It was noted that the COLA is voted as a warrant article. The budget is amended to align with whatever is voted at town meeting. Richard was not comfortable with how COLA is set. Skip reiterated the FinCom vote tonight is a preliminary approval. Department heads were informed to present a budget by Dec. 12, 2006 using the 4% figure. Al called for the vote. The motion passed 4-1.

The next line item was #151, Legal Services. Jen budgeted \$45k this year and has budgeted the same for FY08. She stated that things have gone well thus far having spent slightly less than 50% at the halfway mark in the year. She also noted that this figure is highly unpredictable since she cannot predict when something requiring legal service might arise. Richard wondered why Jen has budgeted the same for FY08. She said that she has looked at the actual expenses year to year and that, all thing being equal, she felt this was as close as she can predict. She informed the members that her legal services line item covers not only the Board of Selectmen, but other departments as well. There was a motion and a second to approve line item #151. The motion passed 5-0.

Jen next presented her budget for line item #192, Town Hall. She is concerned that she did not budget well for FY07 and that she might need a reserve fund transfer. She cited the facts of operating two buildings for the first time and that the Town Hall has had continuous system failures. She said little is spent on supplies, but that utilities have added a lot to her expenses. Al asked if it would be possible to separate the cost per person for each building. Jen said she

couldn't do that for supplies, but she could for utilities. Al also noted that there was one energy account for FY06/07. Jen said that has been broken out for FY08.

Richard asked if the "sick building" issue had been resolved. Jen said it was not completely resolved as yet, but it is still being worked on, people are using the building, and it should be fine.

Jen then discussed the deterioration of the Town Hall building. She listed the broken stairs, furnace, bathrooms, etc. Richard asked where the budget reflected a plan to deal with the deterioration. Jen said there is none. She is putting out fires - dealing with things as they arise - and cannot do a 3-year plan because of the state of the building. Richard said that since no one knows when, how or if the building will be worked on or replaced then there should be more thinking about what should be done now. The Town Buildings Committee should be talking with Jen, addressing these issues and should be a part of the annual budget process. Selectman Glenn Hearn noted that \$75K had been appropriated for use on the building. A large amount was spent on the recent bathroom renovations. A lot of problems had been identified, but there is a big question as to what will ultimately happen with the building. Richard said the rationale for decades has been to "do nothing since we don't know what's going to happen." Sharon asked Bruce when the \$75k had been appropriated. This was in January of 2004. There remains \$33k after the bathroom renovations. Sharon stated that it had taken three years to do the work on the bathrooms. Regardless of what will happen with the building, that money needs to be spent now! Richard asked what limits there are on spending the money. Jen will check the warrant article and amendment. She said a new furnace is needed immediately. She will sit with the Building Maintenance Committee to develop a punch list and will get back to the FinCom with that information. No vote was taken.

The next line item was #193, Town Insurance. Based on a recommendation from the insurance agent Jen increased this item by 10%. She believes this does not have to go to bid, but will verify. She said that towns are a bad risk and that insurance companies don't want to bid on them. The vote was postponed.

Jen's final line item was #195, Town Reports. Jen had the report printed off-island last year. This year, DaRosa's has come in with a quote that is well under last year's figure. Jen will solicit other quotes, but does not have to put it to bid because the expense is under \$5,000. She hopes to be able to work with DaRosa's to keep the business on-island. She is having 525 copies printed at a cost of just under \$4,000. She believes this will be sufficient to correct the shortage of copies last year. There was a motion made and seconded to approve line item #195. The motion passed 5-0.

### **Cemeteries Budget:**

Glenn Hearn presented the Cemeteries budget. When asked why there was no revenue, he responded that revenue comes from the sale of lots and perpetual care. There is no way of knowing when someone will purchase a lot. Bruce suggested that a look at recent activity could serve as a basis for estimated revenue. Half of the money goes into a trust fund from which the voters can allow the cemetery department money for maintenance (fences, trees, sheds, etc.). Glenn pointed out that the Superintendents salary was reduced due to the fact that routine maintenance has been reassigned to the Public Works Dept. The work can be done more efficiently by Public Works because they have the necessary equipment.

Glenn discussed new database software that will be used to track burial site locations. This was purchased from the Jackie Green fund that can be used as the Board of Selectmen sees fit. Glenn and his wife are presently entering data with help from Brian Athearn and are beginning with data that has been missing. Eventually, the town clerk will be trained to use this program and will be the person responsible for data entry.

Sharon questioned the 55% increase in this budget. Bruce responded that the interest from the Perpetual Care Fund had aided in paying for mowing. There is not enough in that fund to produce any appreciable interest; therefore, the budget has to cover the cost of regular maintenance. A motion was made and seconded to approve line item #491. Approve: 3, not approve: 1, abstain: 1.

### **Tree Warden Budget:**

Tree Warden Jeremiah Brown presented line items #294, 295 and 297 covering salary, Dutch elm disease and insect pest control. In his presentation he pointed out the urgent need to manage the winter moth situation. He has planned spraying for general town areas using a non-toxic product, "Conserve." He will soon be putting this work out to bid. To cover the expense for this year Jeremiah will ask for money in a warrant article. Anticipating the winter moth as an ongoing problem, he has included this expense in his FY08 budget. Jeremiah informed the members that the state will be clearing the dead pines on State Rd. and that the State Forest people are managing the clearing of dead pines in the forest. Otherwise, he said it was difficult to predict an amount for tree clearing since there's no way to know when a tree will fall across a road.

Skip told Jeremiah that he greatly appreciated the work he has been doing. Skip noticed that Jeremiah had increased his salary from \$300 to \$2400 and wondered if Jeremiah would consider phasing in this increase. Jeremiah said that that figure had been suggested to him and that he would be fine with phasing in the increase. He mentioned that it takes him easily 100 hours a year to do the job. Richard felt it would be alright to increase the salary in total at this time, whereas Al would prefer a phase-in. Sharon noted that the town was lucky to have been only paying \$300. A motion was made and seconded for preliminary approval of line items #294, 295 and 297 with the salary figured at \$2,500. The motion passed 5-0.

### **Superintendent of Streets Budget:**

Richard Olsen first line item was #421, salary. There is no change to this line item. The second line item was #422, General Highway Fund. Richard explained that the increase in this line item was to pay for 17.5 hrs./week summer help. Jessie is working 40 hrs./week. The extra help is needed for road trimming. He clarified that a seasonal employee who returns year after year is eligible for step increases. He plans to advertise for this position. Richard Knabel asked Mr. Olsen to explain the \$36k increase in other property services. Mr. Olsen stated that most of it was for outside contractors for services such as basins, mowing, patchwork, grading, etc. This work goes out to bid. Bruce Stone added that West Tisbury piggybacks with Tisbury for road contracts. A motion was made and seconded to approve line items #421 and 422. The motion passed 5-0.

Mr. Olsen then discussed line item #423, Snow & Ice Removal. Bruce addressed this line item by stating that this is the only line item the town can overspend as long as it is at the same level as the year before. MEMA will reimburse for emergency snow removal. A motion was made and seconded to approve line item #423. The motion passed 5-0.

Finally, Mr. Olsen presented the line item #424, Street Lights. There was no discussion. A motion was made and seconded to approve line items #424. The motion passed 5-0.

**Norm Perry of the Personnel Board** presented a request for a transfer of \$5,000 from reserve funds to cover expenses for contracted services for a compensation review. A salary compensation review is required every 2 years, a job classification review every 5 years. When bids were sent out it took a very long time to receive the responses. There are now three bids, but no funds. If the Personnel Board waits for a warrant article at town meeting it won't allow enough time to get the results from the consultant to base salaries. Al asked why it had taken so long. Norm did not know, but he wants to have a warrant article each year to have funds on hand to avoid a repeat of this situation. There is presently \$26,600 left in reserve funds. Skip asked when the information would be brought to the town once the Personnel Board has it. Al wondered if there could be a special town meeting to which Skip answered yes. Bruce stated that the last adjustment was done in 2006 so the 2008 review is right on schedule. Al was concerned that Jennifer Rand might need a transfer to cover Town Hall repairs. Skip pointed out that the Personnel Board bylaws require the review. A motion was made and seconded to approve the transfer of \$5,000 from reserve funds to the Personnel Board. The motion passed 3-1. Mr. Perry said the Personnel Board would have the final COLA figure by the end of March.

Al suggested discussion of the school budget be postponed to a future meeting. Sharon reminded members about the article for the Town Hall which was to include storm windows, the fire escape, painting floors and walls and the bathrooms. She would like to have a discussion of the state of the Town Hall.

There being no other business, Richard made a motion to adjournment, Sharon seconded.

Meeting was adjourned at 6:23 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Nancy Rogers, Administrative Clerk